

*Private Members' Business*

when the individual does not have the ability to control even the simplest of life's functions.

The proposal before us is that one more time we ask the government to bring forward an amendment to the Criminal Code. It would probably take section 241(b), which says that no one may assist another to commit suicide, and simply add a number of clauses to it. Those clauses would say that no one could assist someone to commit suicide unless it was a physician assisting a patient.

The physician could assist the patient in committing suicide if the patient were terminally ill, if the patient were mentally competent, if the patient repeatedly asked to be assisted in committing suicide by his or her physician, if the facts were certified by an independent physician, and if the case were reviewed by the office of the Attorney General, and that could be the local coroner, the Crown counsel or whomever.

• (1115)

If we ask this House, ask the government, to pass that motion, it could be put forward quickly. It could resolve the matter raised by Sue Rodriguez and others who ask to be assisted by a physician in committing suicide in order to avoid a degrading and painful death.

This is not an issue for the courts. At every stage the courts have asked Parliament to relieve them from a responsibility which is not truly theirs. In the initial instance through the Supreme Court of B.C. and even before the Supreme Court of Canada, the indication has been that this issue is not the responsibility of the courts.

They ask that Parliament fulfil a responsibility to these people to allow them to undertake an act which should not be illegal. We should not be bound by an antiquated law that does not recognize the changes in our society.

This is probably the last opportunity this Parliament will have to discuss this matter. It is not an issue for the courts. It is an issue for Parliament. It is unfortunate that the government has not put a bill before the House. It would have been extremely useful, on the heels of the motion put by the hon. member for Fraser Valley West, for the government to lay before the House a proposal for the consideration of Parliament and for the consideration of the people of Canada. It is now time that the government respond to this appeal. It appears that about 80 per cent of Canadians want something done.

I undertook a survey of the community of Powell River in my riding and the returns from that survey were many. About 75 per cent wanted something to resolve this matter. They are cautious about it. They want stringent controls but they do want to see us aid people who are suffering from a chronic terminal illness that is painful and degrading.

Many of them have seen their loved ones go through this process and they are asking that this Parliament do something. The courts are asking that we do something. Some of the people who are suffering from these illnesses are asking that they be given an opportunity to relieve this suffering.

It is my hope that the court will resolve the problem of Sue Rodriguez. In fact it is my hope that the Supreme Court of Canada will resolve the problem for all Canadians in this very narrow sphere and say that where it has been certified that the person is clearly terminally ill and where the person repeatedly asks, then after an appropriate review the court would permit those physician assisted suicides to occur.

There is an argument for the court to consider. That argument is that Parliament has a responsibility to grant somebody, through a change in legislation, a chance to exercise their rights. I am hoping that it will consider this approach.

The question becomes: Does an individual have this right? Does Sue Rodriguez have the right to ask her physician to assist her in a suicide? Let us look at some of the arguments. There certainly will be arguments put for and against it. We have to consider the fact that a very large number of Canadians would like to see something done by the government in this area.

There is the argument that this is a guarantee of liberty. The charter in section 7 guarantees that the individual has the right of self-determination. If a person does not have the right of self-determination to control their body, to refuse medication and medical treatment then it makes a mockery of the right to self-determination.

There was a recent article in the May 31 issue of *Time* magazine about Dr. Kevorkian in the United States. Dr. Kevorkian is operating virtually as a free agent, without control. The state of Michigan attempted to put a law in place to curtail his activity. The court has now overturned that and said that it is a denial of a person's right